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Exploration and Discovery.

An Early Christian Prayer. — Among the Greek papyri in the Gizeh — now the Cairo — Museum is an early Christian prayer, a translation of which may well interest students of early Egyptian Christianity. The papyrus is perhaps a century older than the Amherst hymn published in the *BIBLICAL WORLD* for January, 1901, being assigned by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt, in their as yet unpublished *Inventory of Greek Papyri in the Cairo Museum*, to the fourth century after Christ. It presents resemblances to the Apostles' Creed much more striking than those of the Amherst hymn, and in other particulars surpasses it in interest, although the structure of the prayer, of course, presents no metrical or alphabetic peculiarity. Its closing lines suggest that it may have been used as a magical formula such as were read over or buried with the dead to avert demons, but the unfortunate uncertainty about one or two pivotal readings, combined with the extreme looseness of construction characteristic of the author, leaves this uncertain.

The translation that follows is based upon a transcription of the papyrus made by the writer at Gizeh in the winter of 1900. Since that time Adolf Jacoby has published the text, with a German translation (*Ein neues Evangelienfragment*, Strassburg, 1900), from a transcription made by Reitzenstein, and to this transcription, which had been to some extent verified by Mr. Grenfell, I owe the solution of some difficult points of decipherment.

I call upon thee, God of the heavens and God of the earth and God of those
[who are] saints [through thy blood]; the fulness of the world,
Thee whom we cannot contain, who didst come to the world and break the
claw of death (Greek *Charon*), who didst come through Gabriel in the
Womb of Mary the virgin, who wast born in Bethlehem and brought up in
Nazareth, who wast crucified
Upon the most holy cross, wherefore the veil of the temple was rent by reason
of him, who didst rise from the dead in the tomb
On the third day of death. He manifested himself in Galilee and went up to
the height of the heavens; who hath
On his left ten thousand times ten thousand angels, on his right ten thousand
times ten thousand angels crying

With one voice thrice, Holy, holy is the king of eternity, wherefore the
 heavens are full of his deity;
 Who leaveth (driveth?) a way on the wings (paths?) of the winds, the true
 Word (?), the God of eternity, who went up into the
 Seventh heaven, who went to the right hand of the Father, the blessed lamb,
 wherefore souls were set
 Free through his blood; to whom the brazen gates opened of themselves,
 who broke in pieces
 The iron bars, who released those who were bound in darkness, who made
 death (Greek *Charon*) without issue,
 Who bound the apostate enemy who was cast *down* to his own regions. The
 heavens gave thanks,
 And the earth rejoiced, because the enemy departed from them and thou
 didst give freedom to the creation that asked for
 A Master, Jesus. Thou voice that forgivest sins as often as we call upon thy
 holy name,
 Principalities and powers and world-rulers of darkness or unclean spirit or
 fall of a demon
 At noontide, or cold or fever or ague or ill treatment from man
 Or power of the adversary, shall not prevail against the Image, because by
 the mighty hand of
 Thy deity the mercy of the world was made, *even by the hand* that ruleth
 eternity.

The name *Charon* for *death* reflects an interesting survival of old Hellenic terminology, and that the whole of the earlier content (*lion*, etc.) has not disappeared from the word is evinced by the reference to the claws. On the basis of these words, "the claw of Charon," Jacoby seeks to connect this prayer with some recently discovered gospel fragments in Coptic which contain the same unusual expression, and which he tries, without much success, to identify with the Gospel according to the Egyptians. If these relationships could be maintained, this prayer might assume an entirely new importance as an epitome of that long-lost gospel; but until more substantial arguments can be found for them we must be content to see in it only a strange compound—half prayer, half charm—of an unenlightened Christianity and an enfeebled paganism. The Greek, through a number of errors which are most naturally explained as having arisen in repeated transcription, shows that the prayer is older than this particular copy of it; how much older it is impossible to say, but it can hardly have belonged to a very early period of the Egyptian church.

The prayer is eminently scriptural; indeed, it is little more than a

patchwork of biblical quotations, though these are sometimes very freely handled. The writer seems to have had all of our New Testament, for his language shows the influence of Pauline, synoptic, and Johannine writings. His most striking quotation is that from Eph. 6: 12, "Principalities and powers and world-rulers of darkness," upon which the magical formula follows with such abruptness as to suggest that it constitutes a late addition to what before was a lofty prayer of praise.

EDGAR J. GOODSPEED.



THE BOY JESUS.—HOFMANN